Aviator Admits That the Aero Planes Are Crude Affairs

Your mother has stopped
her idle talk of the Dorset fog,
to tell you this is improper—to tell you it sounds
the strangest proposal of several hundred.
I am not invited to dinner Tuesday.

The charivari assemblies stand outside
our windows; your brother rips
the pages of a sermon, sliding them through
the cracks in the window panes.
He does not intend it, though I thank him
for mending the cold drafts.

On Wednesday—aviation still
in its infancy—we attempt to cross the Pacific
when I don’t want to hear this anymore.

Your mother
quietly occupies an empty seat
while you are stowing our bags—

_Steeplebush is an astringent._

_If we need it,_

_it will be there_

—while

I polish the inherited silver.

---

**Foreign Man Responsible for Flood**

Suppose that you are watching me
bleed—moving along the ground, the way
any person not versed in aviation would,
unacquainted with radiosondes—an illiterate
reader of your map’s occluded fronts.
Suppose that you are watching me
lick the condensation
from moss-covered parapets—
a baroque balustrade
somewhere alone in the undergrowth, etched
into our—used to be our—wet townscapes,
all nonsense from such an altitude.

**Her Husband’s Legs**

Your skin *is this*

> all there is? I say your bones trace themselves, cut-out paper doll

*you can,*
dig them into my thighs. Up the staircase, through the hall, in here, *in here*

against the wooden

door frame, divan, *a man died in this room last year,*

and when I find you, like

Her husband’s legs hung over the side of the bed and were twitching in the last stages of death convulsion. But the neighbors heard

*did you hear me?*

No. Music scratching, *we don’t need it,* you

are a musician.

*You are* your legs. My legs

hanging from our mattress, tensing warm—*death convulsions.* No.
Mail Service Unexpectedly Halted on Tuesday

There was a clearing, through
the overgrowth, where you stopped

caring to

shear the Rosemary—I didn’t know

this was perennial.

I told you.

The trellis is overgrown.

You return on Mondays.

Your letters are now addressed not

in the prosperous characters

of a typewriter; to the care

of an economy passenger,

    the proprietor of radiators, heart valves,
    sextants, self-cleaning birdcages,
    ink erasures, and iron lungs.

I don’t expect that you will equip your new biplane

    with any of these.
Your brother took an ax
to our apiary;
the absconding swarm
flies home toward Coventry.

Starvation

This isn’t us, you say. *This isn’t us.* A fabricated cautionary could-be, we—
we could be.

*No.* You haven’t been inside me,
not like a tradesman,
*like I am when you lie like that.*

Couldn’t be. Could not be.

*They wouldn’t write about us anyway.*

Starvation, lack of employment on account of the building trades strike,
a sick wife slowly dying caused the bricklayer, who lives at No.423 East
Eleventh St., to commit suicide and

*you say pretend*

*I am doing something terrible,*

make you push your plate away, cradle cold
placards outside of city hall, stop speaking;

striking

words, pretend you didn’t read them.

Strike me. No.

Even if you wanted to, you say,

_I know little of masonry_, although,

you built this house, and you study disassembly.

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**Aberdeen Has Placed a Tariff on Stamps**

_What do you do when I’m away?_

I spend our descent sorting

the saved

  ticket stubs

  postcards

  fountain pen correspondence,

hiding them recklessly beneath—

Two women sleep in the bulkhead

_I know where you bid them_
where I hid your clothes.

19E asks if the pilot will survive—

*He is of the most dashing and*

*popular youths in Washington*, born

of Coventry. *They judged by the taste.*

—and I know you will.

*All the calculations show*

*it cannot work.*

You move a splintered propeller to place one

of your unscathed and strewn letters

*I'm sorry*

onto my severed leg.

Your brother wants to leave

the bodies in the field.

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### I Meant the Opposite

“There is not a single line in this diary that does not call for a correction or a denial. Yes: throughout these pages I meant what I was writing and I meant the opposite.”
You pull a splinter from my palm,

stolen, swallowed the whit,

apologizing

to the birch in the garden, wrapping gauze

redundant,

around—

You will come home on a Thursday, will not

audit the laceration.

When the fragment pierces your naval, you pull the dressings

from the delaminating body, wince.

No; Statuette.

You will leave on a Sunday, carrying my things, nondescript; and I will be unsuitable

for the tree

when it asks for its pieces.

You read aloud from a book of poetry, my hands at your mouth to cup the words, breathe

them in, keep you in my lungs, regurgitate

onto my pillows.

The pages are blank.

I’m wiping blood from the fabric; tell me to go home.
He is efficacious. The grass is littered with over-ripened plums.
We will let them collect. Name our sons.

Two of our pages bent, water stained;

your mother hands me an iron, lets the faucet run,
tells you to continue reading.

To a pastor:
I am preoccupied with your tongue,
a hand against your mouth;
black ink thumb-stains—
they will look for wells up my thighs.

The answer does not exhaust the problem.

You tend the garden with Esau, he cries into the herbs, writes a letter into the mulch, we have nothing to lose.

I’m on my knees when you wake up, washing your feet, singing in Latin; pull me by my hair, against the wall, you say, there are holes in your baseboards wide enough for my fingers to

You grin into clavicles, wait for the ceiling to fault
against your back; tell me to stop.

Lean down, twice,
wipe your lips.
“There’s something tragic about you. Your feeling for the absolute. You were made to believe in God and spend your life in a convent.”

He thaws his fingers between kneecaps, delicate,

swathing—

the vulgarity of her legs, obscured beneath

a proletariat forcing indolence inside of you. This liniment is threadbare across the chest, gnawed, contravened.

“I was ready to deny the being of space and time rather than divulge that love might not be unending.”

My shoulders narrow beneath your fiber collar bones, bearing down teeth; I don’t have a fever.

“Irages are alright for a while.”

We grieve forty-million deaths, twist the ends of tickseeds

into Roman crowns, pen letters to Cicero—

he sends two telegraphs;

To a husband:

I am a nonbeliever.
To a wife:

Part your lips.

On the outside, this is pretty; “I tore myself away from the comfort of certainties” to a canyon in your chest, abandoned my things, slept by the water, fell into the rocks fifty-eight fathoms, down to your hips, to your

These are mine, he points to my legs, and this, my jaw. These are mine, I point to his arms, and this.

You are: the existence of universals. The history of religion, an appointed consular:

you are— pressing yourself against a frenzied idealist, forewarning a breathlessness.
An overture.

We post placards on our doorframes, and point to them when our family visits:

“You have never had any confidence
in him. And if he has no
confidence in himself
it is because he sees himself through your eyes.”

I am intoxicated, disoriented—
our tepid matadors knock at your gates, blood-letting
from your back, the motivation of an ancestral tithing.
They’re watching us, impetuous,
choler.

In June, we’ll say, everyone is so nervous lately.
They’ll slip notes under your doors,
“That’s the worst sin of all - the sin of omission.”

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Lay against me.

Benumbed. Quiet and
snapping threads from cheap lace,

You dropped these, Iscariot.

picking our splintered baseboards;
scribing
a map of your theist
hands sliding into
insular hips.

Call the pastor; smeared-sweat crosses
on your thighs—autem, he draws
a collaret, she likes it like this, when you

He’s watching us.
He’s amused,
eating crows, bristle-choking,
reach in, pull the vanes.

I possess no particular talents in Beirut.
A saint disagrees from the sill, breathing
heavily
against your neck, in protest.

“I think that where you go wrong is that you imagine
that your reasons ought to fall
on you, ready-made from heaven.